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CHALLENGE

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CAPITALISM KILLS STUDENT

FIGHT BACK VS PUSH-OUTS

Balloons released in mourning of a student's killing

BROOKLYN, NY, March 29—When a neighborhood shooting took the life of a former student, a small school had two very different responses. The administration killed 17-year-old Claude* twice—once by pushing him out, and again by blaming him for his own death—while the students and education workers memorialized him again and again.

In doing so, the Department of Education exposed themselves as a racist child-hating system while the working class in this school of mainly untenured teachers is learning how to be pro-student.

"The system is violent —we will not be silent"

As his teacher and communist, I am learning how to win people to fight back and connect Claude to the violent nature of capitalism. A system that kills kids has got to go.

His life mattered

What can I say about Claude except that people loved him as much as he loved life and learning (see box). Three schools are mourning him—his primary/middle school, our school, and his transfer school. The union grief counselor remarked that he "never saw anything like it." Claude was a neighborhood kid and everyone knew him or of him. He has left a senior and junior class in despair and anger, while the administration has left all the students and workers in the dark.

Instead of acknowledging the death and providing support to grieving students, the principal refused crisis support from the bigger DoE bosses. Instead of reaching out to the family, she smeared Claude's reputation and character. Instead of holding a school-wide memorial, she reluctantly surrendered to a memorial wall, albeit deep inside the school.

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A racist education system

For a child who liked learning, he was not treated like one. Claude was pushed out because he wasn't the type of kid who put his head down. No, he had a beautiful mind of his own:

•When asked to describe himself in a personal narrative unit, he wrote, "I'm funny, fast, and smart. I like to laugh and joke around a lot. I am passionate about living, and who I am today."

•When taught to use figurative language, he wrote his best friend was "as brave as a shark." He also loved music and word play.

•In a free-write, he wrote, "The moment I'm most ashamed of is doing online work…I think the school owes me an apology because I get bad attendance for having my camera off."

•For his persuasive speech, he had chosen to write about how testing negatively affects students and why it should be eliminated.Instead of nurturing a child who knew how to think for himself, the public school system discarded Claude.

One purpose of capitalist education is to recreate all the inequalities of a profit system and teach obedience. It sells the fake idea that if you only work hard enough, you'll make it so just shut up and do your job. This logic ends up blaming students for a rigged system where some have to fail in order for a very few to win (and even the winners are losers at the end). That is what we call a scam, one that disproportionately cheats Black, Brown, and immigrant students out of an education.

Claude deserves a world where we care about kids, not grades; music programs, not imperialist wars; and relationships, not suspensions. That world is not possible under capitalism.

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✯The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✯Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✯While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✯Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Latest crisis of capitalism: blood sucking banks

The collapse of Silicon Valley and Signature banks exposed the worst financial crisis to hit world capitalism since 2008. Even as the U.S. bosses rushed to protect the millionaires' and billionaires' deposits, and Europe's financial bosses did the same for the giant Credit Suisse, a broader disaster is brewing. The instability in the world banking system is the direct result of the larger crisis of capitalism. It is driven by the decline of U.S. finance capitalism and the rise of the Chinese capitalist bosses. As worldwide recession looms, the working class is shouldering the pain. The bosses' troubles can only get worse. Our liberation has one path: communist revolution.

Blood-soaked banks

Banks are one of the great crimes of capitalism. They produce nothing of value yet rake in trillions in profits. U.S. and European banks were born from slavery and built on racism. The banking system financed the ships that sailed to Africa and kidnapped workers. It grew by providing loans for the cotton bosses to buy more land and more enslaved workers to farm it. The banks valued these enslaved workers more highly than the assets of all the railroad companies combined. All of the bogus racist theories that divide workers today were created to justify the brutal exploitation of slavery and the banks' grotesque, blood-soaked fortunes (1619 Project Vox, 8/16/19).

Latest crisis could rock the system

The current banking crisis reflects the boom-and-bust nature of capitalism. It was triggered by a brazen lack of bank regulation and a fall in the value of long-term U.S. Treasury bonds, a form of debt that is bought with a promise that it will be repaid at a certain interest rate. Today's world capitalist system is drowning in debt, from deficit-ridden governments to over-borrowing companies to workers who can't pay their credit card bills and still feed their families.

Since the mortgage crisis of 15 years ago, the U.S. has propped up its struggling economy with extremely low interest rates that encouraged banks, businesses, and workers to borrow heavily, invest recklessly, and spend freely. When inflation soared with the Covid-19 pandemic, and the U.S. Federal Reserve responded by raising interest rates, the banks' lower-interest Treasury bonds lost much of their value. At the same time, many midsized and smaller tech companies—the dominant depositors at Silicon Valley and Signature—were forced to withdraw funds as their cost of doing business went up and their revenues went down. To pay these depositors, the banks were forced to sell off their bonds at a steep loss. Other depositors panicked and rushed to take out their money as well, setting off a bank run—a prime example of the anarchy of the profit system.

With as many as fifty other banks in crisis (CNN, 3/13), the U.S. rulers rushed in to reassure obscenely wealthy venture capitalists that their money is safe because the bosses' government will guarantee it. On the other hand, inflation and high interest rates mean that tens of millions of workers can't afford to buy a home. Millions have been foreclosed upon by the banks or evicted because they can't afford their rent. With grocery prices skyrocketing, one of four U.S. adults now struggles to get enough to eat (CBS News, 3/21).

Tech industry crashing

The tech Industry, once hailed as the hope of U.S. capitalism, is the latest industry to suffer a plunge in profits--and to make workers pay with massive layoffs. Of the 144 publicly traded tech companies valued at over $1 billion, only 12 percent made any profit last year. Most of them will never overcome their cumulative losses (Market Watch, 3/25). The bosses' greed and lack of discipline are coming home to roost.

Worldwide crisis drives move toward fascism

As the failing Credit Suisse was taken over by rival USB, central banks in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Japan, and Switzerland rushed in to guarantee deposits and prevent the collapse of the entire international banking system (Business Insider, 3/20). But this short-term fix cannot stave off the threat of the next massive economic recession or depression.

The U.S. bosses' main rivals, the Chinese capitalists, are better positioned to weather the coming storm. By contrast to the U.S., the Chinese bosses still make most of their profits from manufacturing—from the production of actual goods. In addition, they are much further along the road to full-blown fascism and direct rule, without the constraints of liberal democracy. They are better able to force their billionaires and bankers to put the interests of the entire ruling class first, even if it means that some of them will take big losses (New York Times, 3/27).

At the same time, China's provinces are faced with slowing growth and as much as $9.5 trillion in debt. Strapped for revenue, local governments have slashed workers' pay and health insurance. Hebei Province, bordering Beijing, cut off heating subsidies for natural gas during a record-breaking cold wave (NYT, 3/29). Wherever bosses are forced to balance their books, workers are sure to suffer most.

If the U.S. rulers hope to protect their profits and come out on top in the looming World War III, they will be forced to discipline their fellow bosses while viciously attacking the working class—and ultimately to slaughter millions.

Communist world is worth fighting for

Progressive Labor Party is fighting for a communist world. Under capitalism, buildings sit empty while millions are homeless; food is thrown away as people starve. The education, healthcare, and transportation systems are all failing. You can't eat money. You can't shelter people with hundred-dollar bills. You can't treat diseases or educate children with Treasury bonds. Under capitalism, we are forced to sell our labor for much less than what it's worth, and then to exchange money to get things we need. Money only exists because a system based on profit needs to track how much it steals from the working class. Money has driven workers apart by promoting selfishness and individualism. And when workers are too old or sick to be squeezed for more profit, a society based on money kicks them to the curb.

Under communism, all production will be organized through a communist party to serve the needs of the working class. There will be no profits, no money—and no bloodsucking banks. A communist society will be so much stronger because we will work collectively to run society. Without money to warp our priorities, everybody will be valued. Everyone will be helped to find ways to contribute. Capitalism is quickly going south, and there is no point in trying to save it. The time has come for the working class to say "Enough!" The time to fight for communism is now. ✪

From Bronx to Brooklyn

Smash Racism at CUNY!

BRONX, NY, February 16–"If you love CUNY so much, why don't you take a pay cut?"

City University of New York (CUNY) students militantly challenged University Provost Wendy Hensel at her administration's "Listening Tour," a liberal sham of an event with the intent of squelching the rebellion of antiracist, working class youth. Along with students, CUNY professors and staff members are fighting back against tuition increases and racist austerity in the higher education system. One young comrade led chants for the first time, ensuring the administrators could hear us from outside.

This is the fighting spirit workers worldwide need to see, especially on International Workers' Day, May Day! Fellow antiracist fighters at Kingsborough Community College joined with CUNY students later in the week to share their organizing experience against police terror on campus and in the streets. It's important for the future of our class that students make connections across campuses as a way to gain confidence in our class' ability to control our own education and labor.

Students get a communist education through campus fightback.

Liberals: The wolves in sheep's clothing

CUNY is a perfect example of liberal bosses being a greater danger to our class. Every political leader involved, from the president of KCC, the CUNY Chancellor, the mayor of New York City, to the governor of New York State (who is pushing for a raise in tuition at CUNY), are liberals. They are hiding behind their "identities," planning to launch wave after wave of racist attacks while hoping to diffuse the anger of students and workers. Members and friends of Progressive Labor Party have consistently exposed these misleaders for what they are: agents of capitalism and enemies of the working class.

Capitalism is the deficit

According to the racist administrators of CUNY, the university system has a $194 million "structural deficit." During the Covid-19 lockdown, the federal government provided hundreds of millions of dollars to CUNY – which they promptly used to cover previous deficits and to buy equipment they could use to push unproven online teaching practices. The torrent of federal funding did nothing to improve the education of the more than 200,000 primarily Black and Latin students at CUNY. Class sizes increased, despite the clear evidence that online courses need to be smaller for students to learn effectively (see study, Oregon State University, 11/1/2021). Furthermore, administrative offices such as the registrar and financial aid suffered a loss of staff that was not replaced. Now that these federal dollars have dried up, the racist austerity at the core of the entire system has reared its ugly head.

CUNY's answer to this deficit is two-fold: the first is to fire as many part-time professors (adjuncts) as possible, and the second is to harass our students to pay the tuition that they owe. Capitalists always try to make us pay for the crises in their system. In this case, the University Provost, who makes $488,000, was there to explain why the students and workers of CUNY will have to tolerate even more racist cuts. We met her with a loud protest, highlighting that these rapacious vipers saw fit to give themselves 30 percent raises right before the cutbacks were announced! We stressed both the need for multi–racial unity to fight back and the need for students and workers to fight together. As part of our ongoing struggle within the group, we raised the question of whether education under capitalism will ever be willing or able to properly educate our class.

Fightback forum – KCC leads the way!

In the Bronx , workers and students have taken inspiration from our class brothers and sisters at Kingsborough Community College (KCC), who, as reported in the pages of CHALLENGE, have taken on the racist administration at KCC. Later in the week, the brave students of KCC visited our campus to describe the ongoing fight against their racist administration, which continues to target antiracist students and professors while giving an openly racist student a security detail as he moves about the campus. Forty students and professors had a chance to learn about organizing and fighting back against fascist attacks from the KCC administration, which happens to be Black and Latin. We discussed how to counter identity politics, how to maintain the fighting spirit after months of work, and how to build a multiracial group that can respond to every attack with strength. Students from both campuses got a chance to exchange ideas and experiences and also enjoy some delicious food prepared by the mutual aid kitchen, La Morada, which has been supporting workers in the South Bronx community with hot meals, clothing drives, and solidarity. The forum ended with a group photo – students and workers from across CUNY, fists up in solidarity, giving a glimpse of the power that our class possesses.

Another world is possible!

The students and workers of CUNY need communism. We need a system where workers can truly be educated on what's best for our class and how to organize society around our needs. No more racist administrators protecting racist students, no more racist cuts in education, no more precariously-employed adjuncts scraping by before being unceremoniously dumped into unemployment. This week, students and workers in the Bronx were nudged closer to seeing this future as one they are willing to fight for. We hope to bring a large contingent to May Day and bring them even closer! ✪

Students protest vs hate speech on campus

Reject fascist bosses, big and small, fight for communism

CHICAGO, March 9 – A multiracial crowd of dozens of students and workers rallied and marched across the campus of the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC) to protest the administration's decision to allow fascist scum Candace Owens and Charlie Kirk space to spread their brand of gutter racism and sexism. Members of the communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and our friends joined the action to support the fight and spread communist revolution as the only alternative to fascism, capitalism's response to a crisis in their system.

Owens and Kirk are right wing organizers and talk show hosts. They travel across the U.S. promoting open sexism, mainly against trans workers. They serve the domestic U.S. capitalists who are mainly represented by the Republican Party. But these are the Small Fascists (see Glossary, page 6).

Although the threat presented by these open fascists is very real for our class, PLP holds that they do not represent the primary danger for workers – the finance capital, liberal bosses within President Joe Biden's camp do. These are the Big Fascists, the finance capitalists who want to maintain their worldwide empire. They want a united working class brainwashed by patriotism and willing to fight and die in a world war to defend these capitalist's profits.

So while we directly confront these gutter racists head on, we need to fight even harder against the multicultural, liberal Big Fascist bosses that seek to disarm our class through shallow identity politics as they build the path to all-class unity and imperialist war.

Fascism is at its core not just about "wicked

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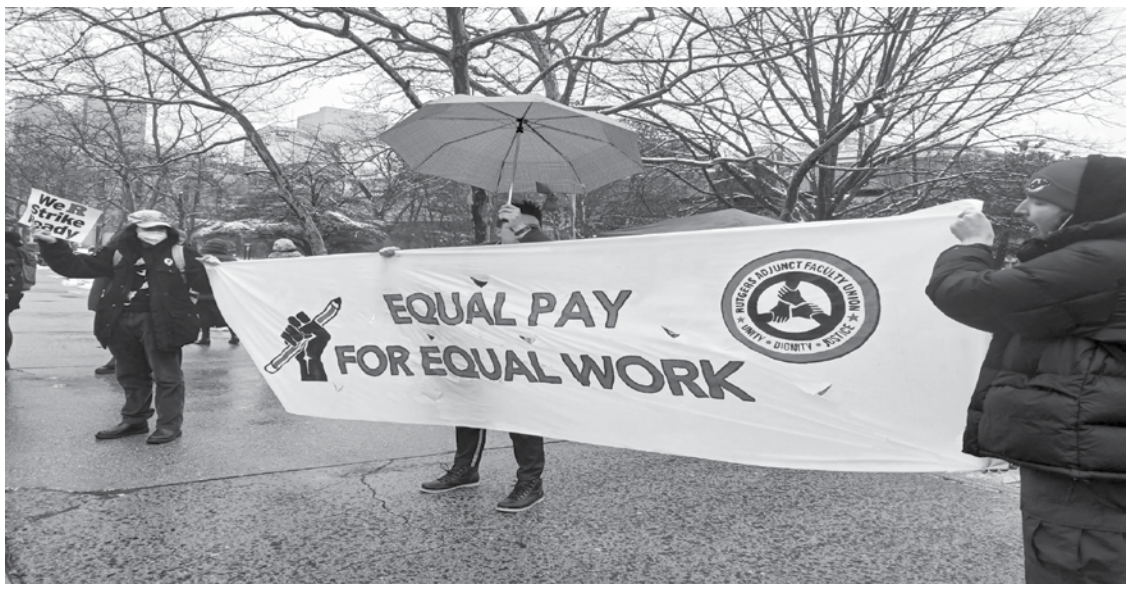
Rutgers: strike is a school for communism

Newark, February 28—"I am a worker!" These words were echoed again and again throughout the Coalition of Rutgers Unions' day long "Take Back the University" event at the college's Newark Campus. The three-part day of protest, which marked the beginning of the faculty union's strike authorization vote, included two teach-ins about solidarity and striking, as well as a rally aimed to disrupt the meeting of the university's Board of Governors (BOG).

On the heels of the Take Back the University day of protest, and after months of fruitless negotiations with the bosses, the 8000 academic workers of Rutgers AAUP-AFT faculty union have officially authorized a strike. Many reforms are on the table, including pay equity, health care, maternity leave, and job security for adjunct professors and graduate students. Though these reforms would certainly benefit those who receive them, strikes are best measured by their ability to mobilize and raise the consciousness of the working class.

Despite freezing rain and fresh snowfall, and the university bosses' last minute cancellation of in-person classes and the BOG meeting, nearly 200 people made it out. While union misleaders spoke in support of electoralism and the bosses' capitalist system, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members provided key political leadership by consistently pushing discussion and chants beyond the specific problems facing Rutgers' faculty and graduate students, and toward communist ideas of class consciousness and multiracial unity.



Exploitation will always exist under capitalism. Fight for communism!

Cowardly bosses are a no-show

The night before the Rutgers AAUP-AFT "Take Back the University" day of protest, Rutgers' Board of Governors announced that it would be switching its only meeting set for the Newark campus this year to Zoom. The Newark administrators also took advantage of the light snow conditions and moved all classes that day from in-person to virtual. They claimed this was for the safety of students and workers, and yet janitors and dining hall staff still had to come into work despite the weather. This differential treatment by the bosses, meant to divide and isolate the members of the working class from each other, was the subject of the first teach-in of the day.

PLP members made clear connections between the shallow identity politics the university and unions advertise, and the neglect, displacement, and mistreatment of the Black and Latin working class in Newark. Our members explained about the university's role as a capitalist institution, one that exploits Black and Latin maintenance workers while also conditioning students with the nationalist and identity-based ideas needed to recruit our class to fight in WWIII. Our comments were then quoted by other workers in their rally speeches. The bosses' cowardice was not shared, and workers were present, receptive, and encouraged by this communist-led action.

Cult of personality on display

While unions offer workers an important tool for organizing our class against the bosses' racist exploitation, they also contain contradictions that cannot be overlooked. Like all reformist organizations, they ultimately work to prolong the lifespan of capitalism.

By endorsing liberal politicians and negotiating "in good faith" with our exploiters, unions work to win our class to this terrible world order. This was clear at the Rutgers day of protest, where Association of Flight Attendants president Sarah Nelson lied on stage about receiving a phone call from liberal misleader Bernie Sanders, and falsely declared that "workers can control capitalism." Amazon Labor Union president, Chris Smalls was also in attendance, and only repeated the same played out phrases about union work being a "marathon, not a sprint," and arguing bureaucratic union density is our class's most important fight.

Both Nelson and Smalls played on their own notoriety by taking selfies with fans and starting chants disparaging Jeff Bezos and other billionaires. They both advocated for the replacement of famous bosses but not their total defeat. These are opportunist lines for those looking to advance their political careers.

Members of PLP helped to shift the dialogue away from these misleaders' talking points, moving the chants away from specific U.S. bosses and toward multiracial unity, at one point having everyone in attendance shouting, "Asian, Latin, Black and White, workers of the world unite!"

Our Party refuses to lean on the cult of personality and lie to workers this way, arguing that our class already runs the world, and that agreeing to the terms of our exploitation at the bargaining table only helps the ruling class keep us under their boots longer. The only solution is a communist revolution!

Strikes are schools for communism!

More than 50 Rutgers workers and supportive community members received copies of CHALLENGE at the union event, and our Party is committed to continuing to provide leadership to our class on the picket line if a strike is called. PLP views strikes as schools for communism. Striking is an important first step in understanding our power to fight back against the bosses' exploitation, and the more workers–inside and outside academia–that come to understand their class position, and the power we have when we work together as a united, multiracial, and international communist party, then we can finally begin to come out of this dark night and one day win the world. Join us!✪

Workers of the world unite - March on May Day

March 19, 2023— Two dozen comrades and friends of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), migrant workers from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and the U.S., met to kick off the mobilization for May Day 2023 in New York City. One by one workers at the meeting reported on mass protests in their countries of origin focusing on Peru, Colombia and fightback against racist murder by police of Black and Latin youth and workers in the U.S.

A comrade reported about workers' massive strikes and fightback in France, Haiti and Somalia. Participants talked about conditions in Ecuador, Mexico and the Dominican Republic as workers confront capitalist exploitation, joblessness, hunger, racism and violence. The similarities of working-class struggle everywhere struck us all! And the might of the world's workers! On May Day we march for the international working class. Workers of the world unite. Same enemy, same fight!

While the working class shows its strength and power, we must face and overcome our weaknesses. A big issue we discussed is the illusion that the "lesser evil" imperialists and politicians are friends of the working class. The so-called leftists, such as presidents like Castillo in Peru, Petro in Colombia, Lopez Obrador in Mexico, Correa in Ecuador to Biden in the U.S., can leave us blinded.

The liberal democrat Joe Biden administration, figurehead for the Big Fascist finance capital wing of the U.S. bosses, represents one of the top imperialist blocks in the world. While spending trillions of dollars on preparations for world war with its rival blocks, China and Russia, the Biden administration has made racist cuts to food stamps, medical care and education and expanded fascist border control to prevent desperate migrants, escaping U.S.-imperialist-made horrors, from seeking asylum. Many more thousands of migrants are dying at the border and trying to cross the Rio Grande River. Many migrants have walked 2000 miles, braving hazardous jungles and forests, trying to reach the border Biden says they cannot cross. The virulently racist and nationalist Biden administration says that if they haven't applied for asylum in the countries they've crossed, they can't apply for asylum in the U.S. PLP calls on workers to fight for communism so we can smash these racist borders once and for all! March with us on May Day!

Capitalists choose profits - workers need communism

One of the young PL'ers who leads the work at a mass organization also gave an informative report on the current capitalist economy. This comrade closely watches the U.S. and world economy as it is important to understand it to see what the imperialists' are doing. The worldwide economies are connected to inter-imperialist rivalry, world wars, employment, exploitation and poverty. The young comrade eloquently informed all of us about the recent multiple bank failures. First, Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), the biggest bank in the state of California, which had to be taken over by the U.S. Federal Government and then Credit Suisse, a Swiss Bank also failed. It was bailed out as another Swiss Bank, UBS, was asked to take over Credit Suisse so it would not go down completely. Unfortunately, the damage has already been done and now these events are causing a ripple effect like a virus across the world's banks and there might be plenty more failures to follow (See editorial on page 2).

This is where the capitalists begin to lose confidence in their allies and begin to cut their ties with these banks and their affiliates. The young comrade reminded us that this is just the beginning and we will begin to see more massive layoffs, because this is what the bosses do in order to cover their losses. Now, there will be massive layoffs of workers in the finance industry and these layoffs will once again trickle down to the rest of the working class in other industries, primarily in the industrial workers' section.

He also mentioned that the bosses can always do what they want under their system, even though they claim that workers can determine their own destiny. But crises prove that it is the bosses who determine which workers are allowed to live and which workers are left to starve and die in the

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58th anniversary

Join the Party that fights for communism

April 17 marked the 58th anniversary of the founding of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). From a meeting of barely two dozen members of the old U.S. communist movement, PLP has grown into an international party now organizing in five continents. Even as our class faces a dark night and growing inter imperialist-rivalry and fascism (see editorial, page 2) we continue our fightback because this is just the beginning of a worthy struggle towards an international communist revolution.

Over our first half-century, PLP has propelled the march to communism—first by leading antiracist, working-class struggle, and then through that struggle advancing communist ideas. This two-pronged strategy—practice and theory—is the basis for winning masses of workers to fight for communism.

Why communism? In our vision, the working class will determine society's future. It will destroy the capitalist world and its brutal exploitation. It will smash a system that drives us into constant unemployment and poverty. It will stop the racism that drags down all workers. It will terminate the racist cops who break our strikes and kill workers, especially our Black, Latin, Asian and immigrant sisters and brothers. And it will end for all time the imperialist wars that send our youth to kill their class brothers and sisters worldwide, all for the bosses' profits.

A Communist World

Here is our vision for a communist world :

A society run by workers and for workers. After all, the working class produces everything of value and should rightfully receive the benefits of our labor. Collectively, we can determine how to share what we produce, according to need.

Abolition of the exploitative wage system and the money that runs it. We have no need for the parasitic bosses who steal most of the value of our labor through wage slavery.

Multiracial unity and death to the racism that divides the working class. Racism is rooted in capitalism; the bosses rely on it to steal trillions in super-profits worldwide. Fighting racism is part of the lifeblood of PLP.

The destruction of sexism and the systemic exploitation, oppression, and cultural degradation of women workers. Sexism is a pillar of class society, and capitalism has only further this lethal weapon against our class. Women and men must unite to smash sexist ideas and practices. PLP emphasizes working-class women's leadership in making revolution, particularly Black women's leadership.

Eliminating all borders, artificial lines the bosses draw to make even more profits from workers they call "foreigners." Nationalism is an anti-worker ideology that enables the imperialist rulers to exploit natural resources and cheap labor. Communists are internationalists because the working class is one international class, with a common class interest, under one red flag.

This is the world the PLP has fought for from the start. We will continue to fight until our class prevails. We invite all workers to join this struggle—for ourselves, and for our children and grandchildren.

Struggle and Theory

From our earliest beginnings in the 1960s, PLP has fought tooth and nail against attacks by the ruling class. We have organized and supported Ford workers and striking teachers in Mexico; wildcatting miners in Hazard, Kentucky; longshore workers in New York City; jute (fiber) workers in India; miners in Britain; garment workers in Los Angeles; bank workers in Colombia; transit workers in Washington, DC; Chrysler sit-down strikers at Detroit's Mack Avenue plant; farm workers in California, and bakery workers at Stella D'Oro in the Bronx. We have stood with evicted workers in Palestine-Israel, earthquake victims in Pakistan, and hurricane victims in Haiti and New Orleans.

Antiracism is a hallmark of PLP. We backed Black workers and youth in the 1964 Harlem

Rebellion, and fought off racist school segregationists in Boston in 1975. In 1976 we integrated Chicago's Marquette Park while smashing the Nazi headquarters there, and have led more than a hundred thousand protesters against the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis across the United States. We have mobilized against racist killer cops from Brooklyn, New York, to Los Angeles, to Chicago, to Ferguson, Missouri.

PLP has led fierce fightbacks opposing the bosses' wars. In the 1960s, we were the first to organize mass demonstrations for the U.S. to "Get Out of Vietnam!" We formed the Worker-Student Alliance in the anti-war Students for A Democratic Society. PLP broke the U.S. travel ban to Cuba and undermined the rulers' House Un-American Activities Committee to the point of collapse. More recently, working both within the military and on the streets, we exposed the U.S. rulers' invasions of Iraq as a murderous oil grab.

None of these developments came out of thin air. They grew out of our Party's analysis of past class struggles and the achievements of millions of workers. PLP studied the strengths and weaknesses of the communist movement led by—among many others—Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin and Mao Zedong. In 1917, this movement created a revolution in Russia; in 1949, a revolution in China. It defeated the Nazis in Europe and fascists in Japan in World War II. It reached its highest point in China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which attempted to push back a growing elitism in the Communist Party leadership and put the masses in charge of society.

PLP is the only group on the left to point out what went wrong in the Soviet Union and China. We are the only organization to analyze how socialism in those countries led back to the unvarnished profit system, where all workers are now mired.

A communist society will have no bosses or profits. It will be led by the working class through its Progressive Labor Party.

Marxism: An Evolving Idea

The history of the Progressive Labor Party began in 1962. A small group of communists left the Communist Party USA and organized the Progressive Labor Movement. They rejected the CPUSA's capitulation to capitalism and its abandonment of the open advocacy of communist revolution. The old communist movement proposed that the bosses would peacefully relinquish control of society and allow what the CPUSA called "socialism" to be "voted into existence." The communists who formed PLM refused to mislead workers and broke away from the old guard.

In the course of PLP's history, we have rejected some traditional Marxist concepts and advanced a number of new ones, all based on our practice and our examination of world events and the decay of the old communist movement. These new principles are expressed in a series of documents, including Road to Revolution I, II, III and IV; Revolution Not Reform; and "Dark Night Shall Have Its End." (These are all available on PL's website or in pamphlet form.)

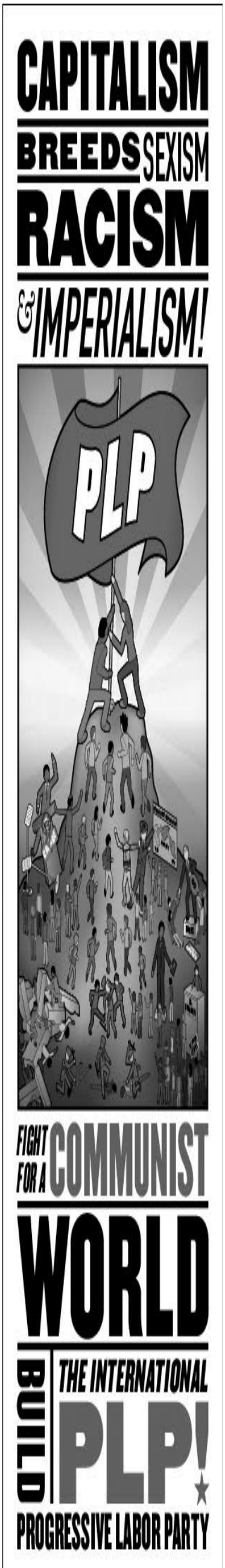
Above all, Progressive Labor Party stands for the principle that the working class must fight directly for communism rather than moving first through a transitional phase of socialism. We reject this two-stage theory, a central premise of classical Marxism, because events have shown that socialism inevitably leads back to full-blown capitalism. In both Russia and China, socialism preserved capitalist features like money and the wage system, leading to inequalities that divided the working class. In both of these countries, the communist party became a new ruling class where privileges were attained through party membership. We believe the working class can be won before the revolution to fight directly for communism—to abolish the wage system, the cult of the individual and other capitalist relics.

Core Principles

PLP's main principles are:

- Internationalism, under the slogan "Smash All Borders," where workers' class unity is represented by a single mass, international Party;
- The fight against racism, a strategic necessity in the struggle to overthrow capitalism;
- The fight against the special oppression of women, another critical component in uniting the working class, a prerequisite for revolution;
- A concentration among industrial workers, who produce the capitalists' profits and the weapons for the bosses' imperialist wars;
- Workers' power through armed struggle, since the rulers will use their armed state power to violently suppress the working class.

Throughout its existence, PLP has fought for these principles in unceasing class struggle. We have learned that building the Party is the first order of business for communists. Capitalism cannot be reformed. Whatever gains workers make in reform struggles are limited and temporary; sooner or later, the bosses always use their state power to take them back. Communists strive to turn reform struggles into schools for communism and building the Party. Winning workers to PLP is the one and only victory the ruling class can never take back. We therefore urge all workers and youth to join us in the next half-century in this historic task: to organize a communist revolution.✪



LETTERS

We encourage <u>all</u> CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Communist politics best self-care

Coming to the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) [over the past three months] was a new type of experience that I hadn't had before, really. Since I was young, I had been relatively politically involved, but primarily focused on women's and LGBTQ issues; mostly I was involved in online debate. Several times my mom brought me to political events, though there was not really historical discussion at these events (marches, getting people to vote in local elections, etc.)

I was pretty surprised when I came to the PLP meeting. My first and most preeminent observation was that the meeting was set up almost like a classroom and almost like a group therapy meeting. That structure was definitely reflected in the dynamic and in my experience; the goal was to educate people on history but PLP inadvertently (or not) created a space that allowed people to let out their feelings and analysis of the world and our system. The way that it imitated professional group therapy can definitely be connected to a topic we dealt with in one of my classes - that resistance itself can be a form of self-care.

I decided to come with a friend the first time for a few reasons - 1) I spend the majority of my time with this friend, 2) it was the closest thing to coming alone and 3) coming with this person provided me with more expansive analysis after the meeting ended. Only after the first meeting did I decide to bring more friends. I was hesitant to bring one friend, but did so.

The discussions were interesting because they were composed of people who were educated and familiar with the content and people who came because they were curious. I think that I was better equipped to respond to that same curiosity back at school.

In all honesty I don't really know what is next. I guess I could continue to just try to discuss the world and educate those around me but that also does not feel effective or impactful. I'll be coming back to the PLP meetings and continuing to try to self educate and share my findings, but I struggle to construct a plan that is satisfactory.

Editorial note: A plan to get to know the family and recruit this student to PLP is in place.

★★★★★

Talking about a (communist) revolution

"Based on what you are saying, reform can have the opposite effect. It could keep people away from revolutionary ideas." "Exactly."

My response of "exactly" ended a two hour lunch conversation with friends and leaders of one of the strongest more militant reform unions in Chicago. All of them are committed, and tireless fighters against racism, and committed to fighting injustice, and fighting for equality for their members. The lunch I discovered is a customary send off for those workers who retire from the union.

We started lunch talking about the contentious Chicago mayoral election taking place between the two runoff candidates: Brandon Johnson (Black) a County Commissioner, former middle school teacher, and former union leader that has been endorsed by the Chicago Teachers Union. Johnson is running against Paul Vallas (white), former Chief Operating Officer at Chicago Public Schools, proponent of charters, vouchers, and balancing education budgets off the backs of teachers' pensions. The Fraternal Order of Police has endorsed Vallas.

My friend said that the spirit of racism will always be here in reference to the election and the unions' effort to build a union that fights for the "common good" and that history is cyclical racism. I immediately responded to both her statements and said that racism is rooted in the economic system of capitalism and it's far from a spirit or a belief. It has a material base in capitalism and that history is not cyclical because there are times in history where race did not exist.

Well, my friend immediately disagreed with me and I was totally taken back when two other friends said that they agreed with me. W-H-A-T! That had never openly happened before in department meetings. I acknowledged that my experience working in this union was both rewarding and inspiring.

However, if we don't take advantage of the opportunities of pointing out the limits and the contradictions of fighting for reforms our class will get cynical and be won over to bad ideas. My friend said to the whole table after packing up and paying the bill, "We should have more discussions like this."

The conversation helped me realize that we must have these conversations with everyone. Going into the lunch I was feeling one-sided about my friends/leaders in terms of them even wanting to talk about revolution and reform. I also was not clear if they would be the liberals that would lead us into fascism. As I left the restaurant, I was humbled by the contradictions and the period that we are in as we build for communist revolution. I'm more confident in the Party's line and confident that our class will win.

★★★★★

Capitalism =bosses' dictatorship

Most people I speak to believe the government is a democracy where capitalists and workers decide issues, but capitalism has always been a dictatorship of the capitalist class. Some examples include, the majority of the French National Assembly just voted to defeat an anti-worker raise of the retirement age only to have their votes ignored by the capitalist rulers.

The U.S. railroad capitalists ignored government regulations on safety and maintenance that have greatly increased the number of train wrecks and have subjected communities to poisonous air and water pollution in Ohio and elsewhere.

Many U.S. banks ignored liquidity obligations and used low government interest rates, meant to create jobs, to provide loans to capitalists who used the money to buy back their own stocks to raise their profits and CEO's salaries. The result so far has been worldwide bank failures and a possible recession requiring bailouts by taxpayers while the bankers retain their wealth.

The U.S. has been involved in endless wars but I can't remember the government asking workers to vote for those wars. The wars in Korea and Vietnam that I remember offered only jail time for war resisters.

Capitalist dictatorships have been a disaster for billions of workers worldwide and now threaten a nuclear war from which the world may not recover unless workers, soldiers and youth join PLP and the revolutionary movement for communism. Read CHALLENGE.

★★★★★

To expose bosses: keep writing simple

The article "Fight Imperialist Warmongers" in the March 15 issue of CHALLENGE, reporting on a Libertarian Party led rally at the DC Lincoln Memorial had some good points. However, the sentences were convoluted and probably not intelligible to the regular worker. I almost thought that it was attacking the left, but after reading it twice, I realized that it was referring to the "left and right-wing media," which is offered as a ruling class alternative to the true left, which is Progressive Labor Party. Simplification is the solution to most problems in all, and especially expository writing

★★★★★✎

Workers of the world unite on May Day

Continued from page 4

streets, because there is no freedom under capitalism.

The young PL'er gave an example that if he was starving to death and had to feed himself and his family, then he would do whatever it takes to survive even if that meant breaking the bosses' laws. He pointed out that only workers are penalized for breaking the laws, while the bosses freely break them all the time with impunity.

The bosses control the system right now. With a communist revolution workers will control everything and we will produce for worker's needs, not to enrich capitalist bosses. Communism means true freedom worth fighting for!

Fight sexism—build the leadership of women workers

Our PLP club and study group has just a few women. We made a big effort to invite women to the meeting, emphasizing the importance of women in the struggle. Success! Almost half of the workers in attendance were women. Their active participation energized the meeting. One comrade jokingly said, "Rosa, you're a women liberationist." "No," she answered, "I'm for building the unity and strength of our class!"

Behind the divisions in the working class and illusions about "lesser evil" capitalist politicians, is a lack of confidence in our class making a revolution for communism. On May Day, we build this confidence and the international Progressive Labor Party. The only solution is communist revolution! Having shared a delicious meal, we left inspired to invite friends and family to May Day 2023, to organize workshops in the community organization we're in and to leaflet widely getting names and telephone numbers of interested people. Getting those phone numbers is not an unimportant detail as two long term comrades explained that was exactly the way they met and joined PLP. Onward!✪

GLOSSARY

COMMUNIST TERMS

Fascism

Capitalism's response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They're willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They use open racism to build a political following.

Liberal bosses the main danger for workers

people" but rather the desperate strategies employed by all capitalist bosses to save their profit system in crisis. We need to build our international Party to overthrow the capitalist system that ultimately gives rise to fascism and war–no matter the appearance or the promises of the bosses at the top

Fight gutter fascists head on

The anti-fascist, antisexist students and workers first gathered at the quad area to assemble before marching a short distance across campus to the forum site. Those of us in PLP and our friends came equipped with signs, a flyer about growing fascism, and copies of CHALLENGE in order to sharpen the militancy of the protest.

At first, the leaders of the march and their marshals directed the protestors to an open site on the other side of the street from the forum. But after a short while enough participants pushed to be closer to where the gutter fascists were entering. Once there, we were able to confront the open fascists more directly.

Organizers from different student groups led chants and gave speeches that shared their "disappointment" that the university had permitted the forum. All in all, a naïve tone dominated the politics of the event, as if we could ever trust the university bosses (or any boss) to really be on the side of the students or workers.

Thankfully, a more militant Black student took the megaphone and called for more open confrontation with the fascist goons. He recalled recent experiences that he had getting arrested while protesting against the racist Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) in more remote areas of the state. Other speakers followed, highlighting the connections to March 2016 when a multiracial crowd of hundreds of protestors were able to shut down a Donald Trump rally (see CHALLENGE, 3/25/16).

Self-critically, our contingent of PLP members and friends could have been bolder in giving leadership to this event. Even though the protestors

moved across the street to be closer, there was still a good fifty yards separating us from the entrance where the pro-fascists were entering. The working class can't be satisfied with taking the "moral high ground" against the fascist foot soldiers of the capitalist class – we need to organize to attack them head on! As such, we need to be much less timid in sharpening the struggle in these settings.

Capitalist bosses, big and small, attack workers

The recent rise of fascist hate speech is nothing new under capitalism. As the profit system barrels through crisis after crisis en route to world war, we can expect to see more scum like Candace Owens and Charlie Kirk getting platforms to scapegoat sections of the working class for the failures of capitalism.

At present, LGBTQ+ workers are a principal target for the domestically-oriented Small Fascist wing of the U.S. ruling class that Kirk and Owens belong to. These Small Fascists pin practically everything wrong with capitalist society on LGBTQ+ workers, maliciously smearing them. In doing so, they are directly responsible for obscene rates of violence committed against LGBTQ+ workers and youth, particularly Black and Latin workers who are transgender. We need to fight side by side as a united class against the attempts by the bosses to divide and attack us.

However, to side with the "lesser evil" liberal bosses in this battle is the kiss of death. The still-dominant Big Fascist bosses like those in charge of Chicago and UIC pay lip service to "diversity" and other high-minded concepts while still opening the door for gutter racists in their own backyard. They lie to our face and stab us in the back, all the while promoting a "friendlier" multiracial capitalism.

By avoiding more overt fascist ideology, they can package a more insidious version of pro-capitalist nationalism that is necessary to win our class – including many LGBTQ+ workers -- to future bloodbaths against imperialist rivals like China and Russia. There is no "lesser-evil" – the whole system has got to go!

Communist revolution is the only solution

To accomplish a communist revolution to get rid of capitalism, we need the mass international PLP and our own Red Army. The fascists -- Big and Small -- already have a wide head start on organizing and arming themselves. But they are no match for a united working class armed with communist politics and leadership! Join PLP and fight back today!✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

French bosses face angry workers as they dismantle capitalist welfare system

BBC, 3/22–More than a million people took to the streets across France on Thursday, with 119,000 in Paris, according to figures from the interior ministry. Police fired tear gas at protesters in the capital and 80 people were arrested across the country. The demonstrations were sparked by legislation raising the retirement age by two years to 64.

"I oppose this reform and I really oppose the fact that democracy no longer means anything,"... The unrest also disrupted train travel, oil refineries and saw teachers and workers at Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport walk out of work.

In the northern city of Rouen a young woman was seen lying on the ground after sustaining a serious injury to her hand. Witnesses said she lost her thumb after she was hit by a so-called "flash-ball" grenade fired by police to disperse demonstrators. There were other clashes in the western cities of Nantes, Rennes and Lorient.

Hunger rises in U.S. as bosses shift to war production

Urban Institute, 3/21–With significant food price inflation in 2022 and the expiration of COVID-19 pandemic aid, food hardship has increased for many households across the country. In this brief, we examine trends in food insecurity and receipt of charitable food using data from the Urban Institute's Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey (WBNS), a nationally representative survey of more than 7,500 adults ages 18 to 64.

Between December 2021 and December 2022, the share of adults reporting food insecurity in the last year increased from 20 percent to 24.6 percent. The rate of food insecurity in 2022 was not statistically different from the rate in the year just before the pandemic (23.4 percent in 2019).

Hispanic/Latinx and Black adults were consistently at greater risk of food insecurity than white adults between 2019 and 2022, reflecting long-standing disparities in opportunities and access to resources.

NYPD pigs feast on City budget

Gothamist, 3/20–The NYPD's ballooning overtime budget faced scrutiny from City Council members on Monday…Overtime expenditures were $2.2 billion last fiscal year, 93% higher than budgeted…last month, halfway through the current fiscal year, the NYPD had already exceeded its budgeted allotment for the year, spending $472 million on overtime for uniformed officers.

[City Comptroller Brad] Lander's office found that NYPD annual overtime totals have skyrocketed $700 million over the last decade. One large chunk of overtime through the last three years went to what the NYPD categorizes as "anti-police protests" — $225 million in all..

The NYPD's $5.44 billion allotment in the proposed budget for fiscal year 2024 stands in sharp contrast to the flat funding proposed for the city's public defenders, who also testified at Monday's budget hearing. The defense attorneys say salaries are so low that attorneys are quitting, even as there are 450 pending homicide cases that their lawyers are handling.

U.S. struggles to maintain territory in Middle East

Al Jazeera, 3/27– The governments of Iran and Syria have condemned the United States for attacks on Syrian soil that reportedly killed 19 people, which Washington said it carried out following a drone attack on US forces. Both the Iranian and Syrian foreign ministries late on Saturday slammed the US air attacks that targeted the strategic region of Deir ez-Zor bordering Iraq.

In a statement, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said the "terrorist" attacks by the US hit civilian targets and constituted a violation of international law and Syrian sovereignty. "The US claims that it is present in Syria to fight Daesh [ISIL] that itself had a major role in creating is just an excuse to continue its occupation and loot Syria's national wealth, including its energy resources and wheat," he said.

The latest confrontation with the US comes as Tehran works to re-establish formal diplomatic ties with regional rival Saudi Arabia and potentially other Arab states. Syria will reportedly restore its relations with the kingdom after Tehran and Riyadh review an agreement reached earlier this month with Chinese mediation.

Student killing ignites anger and exposes racist push-out policy

Kids Who Die

The following poem was written by the communist fighter, Langston Hughes (1938). Hughes refers to communist Angelo Herndon who was arrested and convicted of insurrection after organizing Black and white industrial workers in 1932 in Atlanta, Georgia. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were members of the German Communist Party. They were murdered for fighting against German imperialism and war.

This is for the kids who die,
Black and white,
For kids will die certainly.
The old and rich will live on awhile,
As always,
Eating blood and gold,
Letting kids die.
Kids will die in the swamps of Mississippi
Organizing sharecroppers
Kids will die in the streets of Chicago
Organizing workers
Kids will die in the orange groves of California
Telling others to get together
Whites and Filipinos,
Negroes and Mexicans,
All kinds of kids will die
Who don't believe in lies, and bribes, and contentment
And a lousy peace.
Of course, the wise and the learned
Who pen editorials in the papers,
And the gentlemen with Dr. in front of their names
White and black,
Who make surveys and write books
Will live on weaving words to smother the kids who die,
And the sleazy courts,
And the bribe-reaching police,
And the blood-loving generals,
And the money-loving preachers
Will all raise their hands against the kids who die,
Beating them with laws and clubs and bayonets and bullets
To frighten the people—
For the kids who die are like iron in the blood of the people—
And the old and rich don't want the people
To taste the iron of the kids who die,
Don't want the people to get wise to their own power,
To believe an Angelo Herndon, or even get together
Listen, kids who die—
Maybe, now, there will be no monument for you
Except in our hearts
Maybe your bodies'll be lost in a swamp
Or a prison grave, or the potter's field,
Or the rivers where you're drowned like Liebknecht
But the day will come—
You are sure yourselves that it is coming—
When the marching feet of the masses
Will raise for you a living monument of love,
And joy, and laughter,
And black hands and white hands clasped as one,
And a song that reaches the sky—
The song of the life triumphant
Through the kids who die.

NEXT DEADLINE

CHALLENGE strives to be the communist paper for and by the international working class. We call on all readers, supporters, and comrades to submit class struggle articles, analytical pieces, original photos and graphics, letters, and political cartoons.

The next deadline is the

Friday night of April 7th

Send to desafio.challenge@gmail.com. For some guidance and house style rules, please go to www.bit.ly/338ZJow

All submissions are open to collective discussion, struggle, and change. See sidebar on page 2 about fighting for collectivity and against a cult of the individual.

Continued from page 1

This is the kind of leadership capitalist schools give—all done under a Democratic mayor in a liberal city.

Students organize vigil

We added photos and messages on the memorial wall. To counter the racist narrative, the academic and character awards Claude had received while at this school were posted as well. The poem "Kids Who Die" by Langston Hughes (see page 8) was also added and shared with participants.

Later in the week, two education workers and I called out of work to attend Claude's funeral, which further angered administration. I delivered a portfolio of all the writings of Claude from his freshman year to the family. So many students showed up.

When we asked students what they wanted to do, some said, "at least a balloon release and photos." So, that's what we did. Two days after the funeral, students organized a vigil after school. A leaflet explaining that capitalism killed Claude was circulated.

Little did we know that while 24 students and 8 teachers were paying tribute to a clearly beloved student outside the building, a disgusting plan was underway on the inside the school. In true mafia fashion, when barely anyone was around, the memorial wall was disappeared.

Who tore down the memorial?

The next morning, students demanded to know who tore down the memorial wall. One thought it was a kid: "Did they catch him? Did they check the cameras?"

The criminal was none other than the DoE-darling, our Black Caribbean teacher-turned-principal who spends her days fudging data and terrorizing Black, Latin, and immigrant students. Reason for her crime?

"The funeral is over," said the racist.

Learning to stand up

The utter disregard for a child's life angered the students and workers. I asked the students, "What should we do?"

"Put it back up" they said, and so that's what we did. After school, students from the Newspaper Club donated their bulletin board space and posted up a new memorial wall—near the main entrance this time. The administration do their dirty business in secret, but we workers and students must make our fight known. We spoke to every person who passed the halls: athletes in search of the finally-fixed water fountains, guidance counselors and students from other schools in the building, custodians sweeping piles of pencils. Every one of them expressed support for Claude.

The school day hadn't even officially started the next morning, and the second memorial wall was already removed. People overheard the principal yelling, "Take this down now!"

The ruling class—as manifested in this administration—has put students and education workers in a position to take a stance. An angry meeting ensued with the educator workers' union representative. I was also pulled out of class for 30 minutes to be disciplined. But, we walked out of the principal's office with a tiny victory: she was forced to agree to put the memorial wall back up, but in the original less prominent location.

During lunch, a crowd of students and some teachers gathered to put up the memorial for the third time. "Every time she removes it, we'll just put it back up. And make it even bigger."

And that's what we are doing. Working-class students are proving again and again that they can give leadership, and they don't need the bosses and the overseers to run things.

Capitalism is a toxic, violent system

Claude was set to graduate and enlist in the army at a time when the U.S., Russia, and China are in a collusion course towards world war. The U.S. war budget in 2021 reached $801 billion (Watson Institute at Brown University) but there are currently over 70,000 young people without jobs in New York City.

WHY are there so few options for working-class students? To kill or be killed in imperialist war. To be killed in the streets. Yes, the shooter pulled the trigger but capitalism planted the gun.

Individual violence in the streets is the byproduct of the toxicity that capitalism creates. Capitalism's very DNA is the violent exploitation and oppression of the working class by the big gangsters: the rich and their government. The conditions in which working-class students are forced to grow up in are violent—failing schools, dirty waters, slumlord housing, food deserts, sickening hospitals, killer cops, rising homelessness, unsafe transit, inflated prices. All these attacks create a culture of hopelessness and alienation—which the pandemic only made worse—and makes our class more vulnerable to individualism and violence.

Making Black boys disappear

Today, three junior boys said they were suspended and are now at risk of failing. When one parent asked to see the suspension letter, the school said they'd get back to them. The students were told to stay home, and weren't allowed in the building without a parent. Not only did this DoE administration—more like a criminal gang—steal learning time away from the students, they also stole work hours and pay from working-class families who were forced into parent meetings after parent meetings.

Push-out of "difficult" (read: Black, Latin, and immigrant) students from schools is a racist policy. This is exactly what they had done to Claude.

Much like Success Academy—the charter school notorious for having a "got to go" list with names of kids who didn't fit into their prison environment (New York Times, 10/29/15)—this public school disappears student to keep their graduation numbers and other scholastic data high. The principal loves to laud around her stacks of accolades in an unscreened Title 1 school with nearly 1 in 4 students with a special need. The secret recipe is racism.

At the union meeting today, we reported on the administration's racist response to Claude and how it's affecting students. I said, "what happened to [Claude] in the streets was violent, but what this administration is doing to [Claude's] memorial is also violent…and whether or not you knew him, when one of us is attacked, we are all attacked…When students have an event, show up. When your student disappears, speak up."

The workers responded with bravery. One new teacher suggested, "We can send a message by everyone wearing a pin."

Another asked, "Do you have more photos of him that we can post in our rooms?"

Another added, "We need to find a way to incorporate this into our lessons."✪

**The pseudonym Claude is inspired by the communist fighter and writer, Claude Mckay.*

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